

## **Urbanization and Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa: Strengthening the Linkages for Continental Sustainable Development.**

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### **Population Growth**

In 2023, the estimated population of Africa was 1.5 billion, and the most populous countries were Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Egypt. The continent's population is proliferating. By the end of 2024, the estimated population of Africa is 1.523,983,496 people, which would be 18.3% of the world's population. In the same year, 2023, the rural population was 803 million, 55% of the total population of the continent, with Burundi (85%), Niger (83%), Rwanda (82%) and Malawi (82%) being the countries with the highest rural populations, and Nigeria as the most populous African country having 45.72% as its rural population. At the same time, Gabon (90%), Libya (82%), and Djibouti (79%) had the highest urbanization rates. The urban population is multiplying and will be 722 million by 2026. Equally important, Africa, with a young population, is predicted to about double by 2050 (2.5 billion), and the urban areas would absorb a more significant proportion of the resources. What are the rural-urban implications for the increase in Africa's young population? Where would the population be concentrated in rural or urban areas, and why? Why and where would productivity be increased or decreased? How would the opportunities be exploited and challenges be addressed with the young population? We must also consider the natural disasters caused by climate change that severely affect the populations in various dimensions. A productive, dynamic economy also means a healthy labor force with prosperity that is equally or equitably distributed and inclusive development. How would proper decentralization promote economic prosperity and people's wellbeing? The rapid growth of Africa's population and urbanization will likely have far-reaching social-economic, governance/political, institutional and cultural implications.

### **Rural-Urban Linkages**

Thus, rural-urban linkages are essential, as Africa's increasing urbanization tends to widen the development gap between rural and urban areas. Despite the interaction between the two areas, urbanization is said to be transformative, with the rural areas falling behind the urban areas. There will be high poverty rates in the two areas, with 80% of the poor living in rural areas. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and New Urban Agenda (NUA) emphasize the boosting of the synergies between urban and rural communities and spaces to "leave no one behind". The interactions and linkages between the urban and rural areas are crucial for sustainable development. Studies have shown that linkages and interaction form the basis for equitable and sustainable development. These areas faced varying pressures and will continue to change over time. It is also necessary to examine the continuum between rural and urban areas. It is worth noting that the continuum between the rural and urban interface also provides a complex mix of rural and urban characteristics. Urbanization results in urban expansion that creates a sort of urban-rural continuum. Rather than looking separately at urban and rural areas and what matters to each of them, it is essential to look at the links between them: it is from here that positive and durable changes could come. Looking at a continuum and not as separate linkages, can this

approach change the policy perspective? What are the linkages and characteristics or idiosyncrasies and interfaces between these areas? What determines the spatial and sectoral linkages and interdependence? Spatial linkages include migration and transfer or movement of goods, money, services, information and markets.

Moreover, how are the different sectors of the economy linked or connected, given the different socioeconomic, cultural and political activities in these areas? How can the linkages be strengthened? However, note also the climate migrants, extreme weather, health, safety, or prosperity on rural-urban communities, and external (external to Africa) impacts. What are the equitable, lasting climate interventions to enhance the rural-urban linkages?

## **Infrastructures**

A country's infrastructure development is vital for the growth of the economy. Infrastructure can be classified into two main groups- soft and hard infrastructures. The hard infrastructure relates to the physical category supporting everyday life. This infrastructure encompasses telecommunications, roads, railways, water supply and sanitation, seaports and airports, oil and gas pipelines, electricity, irrigation, and storing facilities. Soft infrastructure pertains to human capital, including telecommunications, healthcare facilities, and financial institutions. Infrastructure development generally relates to building or constructing essential systems and technology that empower people to apply necessary digital tools for money, banking, and other activities. Rural-urban broadband and internet connectivity systems and essential services are fundamental for rural-urban development. Infrastructure also includes green infrastructure that covers a broad range of natural and restored native ecosystems and landscape features that make up a system of centers and networks. In today's world, energy and broadband connectivity are necessities. In many African countries, a large population needs more broadband access and electricity, especially in rural Africa. The obstacles to installing and preparing people to use electricity and broadband in rural Africa are even higher and complex. Need for substantial resources and support from public, private and nonprofit organizations/NGO identities in leveraging public capital and getting connectivity, digital devices and training into all localities and in the hands of the people.

However, how can equitable access be achieved? Broadband connectivity means the population and rural and urban economies can access business, educational, and health activities, social opportunities, and facilities necessary for life in this modern, globalized world. Widespread broadband access has multiplier effects for rural-urban linkages—fast-tracking education, health care, social connection, emergency preparedness, and economic development. For instance, studies have shown a positive relationship between suitable transportation infrastructure and the movement of people and goods, with improved productivity and market access.

In discussing trade and real exchange rates, infrastructure investment is crucial in improving infrastructural fundamentals like transportation systems, sanitation and building infrastructure. Investing in agriculture ought to benefit nontradable and tradable sectors of the economy. However, such investment tends to be financed by inflows from abroad, generating, among others, the appreciation of the real exchange rate. The outcome-nontradable sector (like public services, real estate, construction, local transportation, modern hotels, electricity, and water supply) attracts private investment. Private investors have become less drawn to the tradable sector (like minerals,

crude oil, cotton, etc.). Since the appreciation of real exchange rate affects the cost of labor and export earnings, much of the input into mineral and oil exploitation is imported. Agricultural production depends on intermediate goods such as fertilizer. These relationships have negative aspects; for instance, metropolitan expansion tends to engross agricultural land and the natural environment, exploit water and mineral resources, dispose of urban waste in rural areas, and pollute the rural environments. What can negativity be eliminated or reduced?

### **Rural-Urban Migration**

It would be critical to examine the challenges and opportunities for development. African urbanization is increasing, with migrants maintaining connections with their rural roots. Some have a circular migration approach; others straddle between rural and urban- having roots in both sides of the rural-urban areas. However, it is also important to note the implications of international migration, with human and physical resources outflowing from the continent. Within these connections or linkages are constant movements of people, goods and services, money, information, and surplus. The connections between these two areas reflect many factors and diverse dimensions of the societies of these areas. The rural-urban interactions reflect links between sectors like manufacturing, services, and agriculture and links across space, such as the flow of goods, information, and people surplus/waste. The spatial flows are essential for sustainable rural development and urbanization. What are rural-urban synergistic effects? How can the joint connection between these two areas and the distribution of urban functions with the economy create spatial networks and enhance the population's social cohesion and good health?

Rural-urban migration transforms society structurally, shifting people to largely non-agricultural societies from smaller, dominant agricultural communities. Urbanization and industrialization generate economic growth, and developed countries have experienced rural-urban migration differently. The countryside or rural areas are situated outside cities and towns, with urban areas being suburbs and cities with disparities in wealth or prosperity. Characteristically, population density is higher in urban areas and lower in rural areas, with less education, health facilities, and other services available.

### **Rural-urban divide**

Why the "rural-urban divide"? Is it because of inequality in wealth, resources and public facilities, with the rural areas losing their population and wealth to the urban areas? There is hardly any physical or social distinction, division, or marked boundary between the rural and urban areas, with one area being completely rural and the other entirely urban. Decreasing the dichotomy would create a rural-urban continuum, minimizing the difference between urban and rural areas. It may lead to necessary infrastructure from urban to rural areas. Is the countryside merging with towns? What are the implications? Governments and international agencies often implement programs or enact policies without considering the links between urban and rural economies and societies. Agriculture affects rural and urban communities, and non-agricultural production is also carried out in rural areas. Movement from rural areas is partly because of employment opportunities, industries, globalization of manufacturing, and urban economic growth, but rural poverty stemming from poor access to financial markets, education, infrastructure, employment opportunities, health, and more so because mechanization of agricultural work tends to release labor to move to urban areas. The released labor can become more productive.

## **Living and working habits**

There are differences in urban and rural lifestyles. Most urban workers are in non-agricultural activities, trade, commerce, or service, but city life is multifaceted and hectic. Rural people are mainly involved in agriculture and animal farming. Urban-rural fringes are neither rural nor urban—country parks, golf courses, airports, riding stables, and garden centers. Where are the agricultural and extractive industries located? What is the impact of rural gentrification?

The rural mindset is to work to complete the job, while the urban concept stops working when it is time to stop working. Rural life is more remote, with picturesque surroundings, natural beauty or expansive countryside. There is less stress as close to nature, less noise, low living cost, cleaner air to breathe, a safe environment, no traffic and longer life expectancy than in the cities. However, more public transportation, human services, educational and medical professionals, and facilities are needed. Urban (cities and towns) life is busier, in more built-up surroundings with much going on. Differences exist in population size, labor, social mobility, natural endowment, and environment. Some estimates show that 3% of land area is in urban areas, with 80% of the population, and 97% of rural land area, with 19.3% of the population in African countries. Rural or urban, which is richer and in what terms? Asset value is higher for urban people than for rural people. However, urban individuals' median total debt and median net worth are higher.

## **Productive Linkages**

Productive Urban-Rural Linkages mean strengthening small and intermediate towns, enabling spatial flows of people, products, services and information, fostering food security systems, promoting digitization, having beneficial mobility and migration, including reducing the environmental impact in urban-rural convergences, developing legislation and governance structures with decentralization; and equally promoting inclusive financial investments and promoting female activities, among others. What is the role of digitization and artificial intelligence (AI) in these productive linkages?

## **Partnership for financing and development**

Productive linkages foster partnerships between urban and rural actors and stakeholders at all levels, central to positive societal structure transformation. Global partnerships can enhance integrated territorial development necessary for transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies. The objective should be to employ the enormous potentials generated by the synergy of all the areas—rural-urban and tap on all the necessary tools and resources to attain the objective. The heterogeneity of African countries with their enormous endowments provides a unique opportunity to exploit the natural and agricultural potentials for development through linkages of regional dynamics and integration, considering the rural-urban interaction. Productivity improvement or, more importantly, agricultural productivity growth with transformation is critical for the growth of the African continent.

## **The Research Focus**

The publication is an interdisciplinary research project focusing on urbanization and rural-urban linkages, and it includes sectoral, regional, national, and global implications. For instance, what is the impact of resource exploitation in rural areas on rural-urban linkages and trade? How can

digitization enhance these links? **The rural-urban linkages have wide-ranging thematic areas or broad topics. Contributing chapters need to show clear rural-urban linkages, demonstrating policy relevance and applying quantitative and qualitative approaches.** Based on this concept note, the following are some themes to develop research topics for book chapter(s). Contributors are expected to conduct rigorous research, using various approaches and integrating diverse methodologies to bring out robust results and solutions.

### **Broad topics or Themes.**

Develop chapter titles from the above concept note with the topics or themes below:

#### **Rural-Urban Migration**

- Causes and consequences of rural-urban migration-case study:
- Enhancing the Positive Impact of Rural-Urban Migration
- Impacts of rural to urban migration, urbanization,
- Generational Changes in rural consumption and effect on rural-urban linkages
- The Impact of Migration Experience on Rural Residents' Mental Health – Case Study
- Rural-to-urban migration: History, causes and examples with lessons drawn
- Movements between sectors of rural and urban areas
- Labor markets, migration in rural-urban space
- Spatial movements between rural and urban areas
- Impact of rural-urban-international migration on national development.
- Health and healthy labor force migration

#### **Rural-Urban Institutions, Governance, Administration, and Culture**

- Financial institutions in urban areas with rural linkages
- Urbanization and resource stress
- Rural and urban Governance
- Urban and rural Environmental Issues
- Cultural organizations and institutions with urban-rural linkages
- Cultural and Community norms and customs with urban-rural Linkages
- Governance & institutions: Decentralization through rural-urban linkages
- Policies and institutions bearing in rural development with urbanization implications.

#### **Urban-Rural Technologies and Innovations-**

- Advances in technology: Rural versus urban
- Adoption and non-adoption, and solutions with urban-rural linkages,
- Technological and legal environment with urban-rural linkages.
- Impact of new technologies in urban industries on rural development.
- Agro-climatic diversity and technological constraints with urban-rural linkages
- Human capital and technology with urban-rural linkages
- Enhancing digitization and artificial intelligence (AI) in rural-urban links

#### **Rural-Urban Environment and Climate Change**

- Rural-urban garbage collection and disposal
- Climate change in rural areas and urbanization

- Climate change and implication on population growth and movement
- Climate change effects on urban and rural communities
- Climate migrants and urban-rural linkages
- Effects of Extreme Weather on health, safety, or prosperity of rural-urban communities,
- Equitable, lasting climate interventions and urban-rural linkages

### **Rural-Urban Agriculture and Food Production**

- Rural-urban linkages and food systems: A case study
- Food systems and rural-urban linkages in Africa (or country)
- Urbanization, rural-urban transformations and food systems
- Food remittances: rural-urban linkages and food security
- Urban Households and Ruralizing Their Livelihoods
- Rural and urban market integration for agricultural products
- Rain feed agriculture, production and urbanization
- Rural-urban non-farm diversification and the wellbeing of rural farm households
- Agriculture in rural-urban economies
- Agriculture growth links to nonagriculture and urban-rural linkages.
- Food production and distribution: Rural and urban.
- Inclusive Rural-Urban Linkages
- Food Systems and rural-urban Linkages in African secondary cities

### **Rural-Urban Linkages and Development**

- Urbanization and rural development
- Financing rural-urban linkages
- Rural livelihood transformations and local development
- Rural-Urban Linkages and Sustainable Development in Africa or in a particular country
- Rural-urban linkages in ..... Continuity or breakdown in the spatial linkages of rural development and urbanization
- The rural sector in Africa evolves so differently than in other regions.
- Main urban factors that contributed to or caused rural development
- Rural-Urban Integration with Territorial Growth Poles
- Income in agriculture, manufacturing, and services
- Natural Resource-led growth with no rural-urban linkages
- Assessing Rural-Urban Linkages and Their Contribution to Territorial Development
- Determinants of urban-rural development
- Integrating Rural-Urban linkages in planning and policy
- Understanding urbanization and the links between rural and urban areas
- The Changing Nature of Urban-Rural Linkages
- Developing informal rural and urban economies
- Rural/urban population growth -opportunities and challenges with implication for rural development
- Structural transformation with growth and linkages

### **Rural-Urban Connectivity and Broadband**

- Rural connectivity and livelihood transformations
- Local economies and livelihood transformation
- Mobility and connectivity: driving rural livelihood transformations
- Digitalization and Connectivity rural-urban linkages
- Difficult Road Expanding Universal Broadband for Rural-Urban Africa

### **Trade and rural-urban development**

- Trade, related to Urban-Rural linkages, supply and value chain
- Industrialization, Structural transformation with impact on Rural-urban linkages
- Foreign Direct Investment effects on rural-urban linkages
- Factors Influencing Rural Sector Development
- Trade, rural-urban economic prosperity

### **Rural-Urban Poverty and Wellbeing**

- Improving Household Wellbeing and urban-rural Poverty Reduction Policies
- Drivers of growth in the rural-urban linkages
- inclusive growth for Rural-urban development
- Rural versus urban welfare
- Income distribution and inequality in the urban-rural divide
- Rural socioeconomic profile and Urban socioeconomic profile
- Wellbeing, Mental wellbeing, Sustenance, and Water in urban-rural linkages
- Distribution of resources or wealth; Resource Distribution and Poverty in urban-rural divide.
- Social Injustice and Control System in urban-rural areas
- Rural and urban poverty: Characteristics of poverty and their implications for policy action and solutions.
- Rural-urban education, health and life expectancy
- Rural-urban linkages and livelihood transformation

### **Significance of the book project.**

Today's situation of our rural-urban economies deserves more attention from the scientific community. They can also continue to provide policy input in the area. The book, among other things, will contribute to policy discussions on critical economic and social issues in rural-urban linkages. The proposed abstracts (250 words) must be submitted by March 5, 2025, and the final chapter(s) by September 20, 2025.

### **Submission Deadlines:**

<b>March 05, 2025.</b>	<b>Abstract submission</b>
<b>April 10, 2025.</b>	<b>Acceptance or Nonacceptance</b>
<b>September 20, 2025.</b>	<b>Full chapter submission deadline</b>

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